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GREATER BOSTON

AN APPEAL FOR THE FEDERATION OF THE METROPOLITAN CITIES AND TOWNS

by

ANDREW J. PETERS

Mayor of Boston



CITY OF BOSTON
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ADDRESS OF MAYOR PETERS.

The term, Greater Boston, was first used, I believe, by Mr. Sylvester Baxter nearly thirty years ago. It has been the subject of discussion intermittently during all the intervening period. The name is current and familiar; the reality has come gradually nearer through a series of halting approaches, but the full consummation of the idea is unaccountably delayed. It is time, in my judgment, to make the name and the reality coincide; to establish by a formal union and announce to the world this greater City of Boston, the component parts of which are drawn together by an irresistible gravitation.

What do we mean by Greater Boston? The core or nucleus of it is definite enough; it is only the outer boundaries that fluctuate. There happen to be several metropolitan districts, so called, consisting of groups of cities and towns associated for one administrative purpose or another. For convenience, let us take the group as given in the report on manufactures compiled by the State Bureau of Statistics for 1916.

First of all, there is municipal Boston, the center of commerce, finance and distribution, and also an industrial center, giving employment in manufactures to about 85,000 persons, who produce goods valued at \$350,000,000. Next, there is a group of ten municipalities having 90,000 persons engaged in manufactures with products valued likewise at about \$350,000,000. These are Cambridge, Somerville, Chelsea, Everett, Malden, Watertown, Waltham, Woburn, Lynn, and Quincy. After them comes a group of ten other places employing some 15,000 persons with a value of product amounting to \$55,000,000. These are the partly residential suburbs,—Newton, Weymouth, Medford,

Worcester, Wakefield, Braintree, Melrose, Canton, Stoughton and Needham. Finally, there are ten towns almost wholly residential in character, having less than 1,500 persons employed in manufactures, with products totalling in value only a little over \$4,000,000. These are Revere, Wellesley, Arlington, Lexington, Milton, Hingham, Dedham, Brookline, Belmont and Saugus. These thirty-one places, with some obvious additions, such as Winthrop, and, perhaps, one or two omissions, constitute substantially the Greater Boston of ordinary speech.

From almost any natural viewpoint they form a single district. The population, spreading out from the original scattered centers, has expanded and coalesced in many places so that the town boundaries retain scarcely a local significance. We pass from Brighton to Brookline, from Charlestown to Somerville, from Malden to Melrose, from Dedham to Hyde Park, imperceptibly, unawared of any breach of physical continuity. The district has one main water supply, one general park service, a principal sewerage service administered by a single board. It is one district for fire prevention, one postal district, one banking, commercial and distribution center. It is built around one great harbor. In its highway system, its local transportation and railway problems and its police administration it is so essentially a unit that some of these interests are suffering acutely from the present separation.

For this district, having so many vital interests in common, is subject to a multiplicity of governing bodies. The thirty or more city and town governments are completely independent of each other and have little intercommunication. The metropolitan boards, which have charge of parks, water and sewage removal, are responsible only to the state. The Fire Prevention Commissioner is a State official. So is the Boston Police Commissioner. The Rapid Transit Commission, essentially metropolitan in its functions, was originally appointed partly by the Governor, partly by the Mayor


of Boston. The lines of five counties meet in this area and the State Legislature exercises sovereign authority. We can hardly find a bridge across one of our three rivers without fringing legislation, apportioning the cost, and occupying the valuable time of the General Court of Massachusetts.

Altogether, it is a cumbrous and complicated arrangement, which still neglects some matters of supreme importance. It resembles the condition which obtained in the town of Boston before it became a city or in London and New York before they effected the mergers which have confirmed their positions as the commercial capitals of the world.

I believe Boston should effect forthwith a similar merger and have introduced a tentative bill which is frankly a measure of annexation. I chose this form because annexation has been the policy of the past and is the only policy possible if the union is to be made piecemeal. But it ought not to be made in any such dilatory and half-hearted manner. In order to achieve the utmost possible benefit, it should be made largely and boldly, so as to include the whole district in the scope of its provisions. In that event it would be accompanied by a general reorganization, which might very well preserve to the separate cities and towns full local jurisdiction, while creating a metropolitan council, composed of representatives of the district at large, to administer affairs of metropolitan interest.

The advantages of such a metropolitan city, of Greater Boston, in other words, are so numerous and substantial as to justify all the study of particulars and all the missionary effort which will be necessary in order to effect the change. They would justify even the surrender of personal preference and the sacrifice of local pride, in so far as these may be at all necessary in a process which, as I have said, is likely to leave the present cities and towns intact and in full control of their domestic affairs.

The most powerful and far-reaching advantage of a



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union is the stimulus it will give to commerce and industry. It should not be necessary to argue that our whole life, from the daily wages of a casual laborer up to the rarest manifestations of art and culture, rests on these two basic elements. We are holding our own, perhaps, in both, but we are not gaining, as we should and can, in either.

I have been asked whether I think mere size is desirable in itself or will of itself attract business to Boston. Obviously it is not for an empty boast of numbers or to advance a few places in the list of cities that we ask for this radical remedy. It is for the weight of authority that goes with mass. We are now misrepresented to the outside world, as no other American city is, when the municipal Boston, which is about half the district, is reckoned as the real Boston. The real Boston is Greater Boston and the parts at present excluded contain some of the elements that contribute most to our prosperity. We want all the credit and advantage that should come to us for having built up on the shores of our magnificent harbor a flourishing city of a million and a half souls.

In this sense I submit that size will attract business. It will advertise us in a legitimate way, but it will do more than that. I hold that our metropolitan unity will be the symbol of a newly awakened interest and the expression of a new common will. A City of Boston, quickened and thrilled to higher ambitions by such a union and enlarged so that within twenty-five years it will number 2,000,000 inhabitants, will be better able, by the very volume of its resources and the weight of its appeal, to create the conditions that must be established if commerce and industry are to flourish here in full measure.

Such a Greater Boston, for example, might impress the authorities at Washington so as to persuade them to modify the present differential or otherwise dispatch bulk freight from the West to be sent abroad with our more costly and compact New England manufactures. In this way, and in no other that I can see, regular

steamship service to foreign ports will be established. The commercial ascendancy of New York depends largely on just such regular connections.

A Greater Boston, semicircling its noble harbor and collectively conscious at least of the source to which it owes its very existence, would unify its waterfront, now a conglomerate of national, state and miscellaneous private ownership. It would sweep it clear of all its obstructive complications and would provide a belt railroad a few miles inland, so that it would no longer be possible to say, as a member of the State Waterways Commission said recently, that it takes five days to move a carload of freight from the North to the South Station.

A Greater Boston would develop its manufactures, making use of the many available sites which are now unoccupied. From Lynn Harbor and the marshes, through the Commonwealth lands at East Boston and South Boston, as far south as Quincy Bay and Fore River, the opportunities are almost unparalleled. The necessary street connections and household conveniences for employees would readily be provided by the consolidated city, and in such a city these enterprises would find financial initiative and support.

A Greater Boston would act as a magnet to retain local capital, too much of which has been invested in other sections. In the depression of 1893 it was estimated that \$500,000,000 represented the shrinkage of Boston capital in its western holdings. Half of this amount, kept at home, would give an impetus to manufactures and would protect commerce against railroad and government influences tending to deflect it to competing ports.

The benefits of commerce and manufactures, so stimulated and supported, would diffuse themselves throughout the whole district and among all classes of the population. There would be steady employment, good profits, liberal wages, increased deposits in the savings banks, and a higher purchasing power in the community.

A second advantage of the proposed union is that it would give the federated city a better balanced citizenship. Several years ago it was estimated that 70,000 persons living in the suburbs came into Boston every day to work. The number today is probably 100,000. It includes business and professional men, store and office and factory workers, none of whom are permitted any voice in the government of the city, though errors of policy here may sensibly affect their interests.

These nonresident workers in and for Boston are, as a rule, people of character and intelligence. Since the congestion of the city proper has made it less attractive to live in, the natural tendency among comfortable families and newly married couples has been to remove to the open suburbs. This exodus of the well-to-do has caused a sharp decline in real estate values in our residential sections. The city, in short, has become more and more a place of business, with enormous foreign populations, many of whom are not even citizens. Some of the suburbs, on the other hand, betray a tendency to social exclusiveness. The separation of the two elements is an injury to both, in that it prevents mutual understanding and necessary assimilation.

A federated city would bring them together on common ground and round out the electorate where it is now excessively one-sided. Not only should it be the right of Boston business men and Boston workers, living a little beyond the present limits, to vote on affairs of large interest to the district. It should be their duty to do so and to take part in the general government.

A third broad gain would be the organization of our fire and police services and the highway system on a metropolitan basis. The police problem is obviously a metropolitan one. The fire houses should be distributed with an eye to the hazards of the district as a whole, without regard to municipal boundaries which a conflagration might not feel bound to respect. As for the highway system, we have recognized its metropolitan character in the construction of the parkways and

boulevards. But the teaming ways, which are more important, have been neglected and are far behind the present needs of the district, to say nothing of the future. The whole metropolitan area suffers, of course, from the congestion due to a central highway plexus that has been well called "the bewilderment of strangers." The effect of the street labyrinth in Boston proper is to impose a tax on business which is passed on to the ultimate consumer in the remotest suburb. But it is not a local condition, though the evils are localized at their worst in Boston. It exists throughout the district and its paralyzing effects are everywhere the same.

The radial thoroughfares—those leading to and from Boston, like the spokes of a hub—are often not wide enough. The circumferential or belt roads are incomplete. Dead ends and missing links throw traffic into the radial thoroughfares and force much of it back into Boston, where the crosstown connections are inadequate even for the local travel. This is a result of uncorrelated action by the separate towns, which have planned their street systems locally, just as land speculators, developing vacant lots for sale, will sometimes pattern them out in lines that show no correct articulation with the neighboring thoroughfares.

The remedy is the metropolitan city, which will widen the radial roads and join the circumferential ways in a series of concentric thoroughfares. Otherwise we shall have learned nothing from the example of the Boston street plan, which is the despair of experts and a huge damage to the city and the district. We shall repeat its costly errors in the larger city that is almost here and may not awake to the necessity for change till the expense of change has become prohibitive.

Another large benefit from amalgamation in the form proposed would consist in the shifts and transfers of population that would follow. The present boundaries, artificial and all but invisible as they are, exercise a certain restrictive influence. The union of the cities and towns would start a freer movement or, rather,

hasten the movement which is already in progress. Between 1910 and 1915, the population of Boston proper increased only 9 per cent, while that of the northern half of the metropolitan district gained 14 per cent and that of the southern half 15 per cent. This shows a gradual overflow into the less congested territory. Such an overflow is, from the larger viewpoint we must all try to take, eminently desirable and beneficial. The population of Boston is none too well housed. It has sections that are a disfigurement and a danger, not only to the city itself but to the entire district. They breed disease, crime and social discontent. The effect of the union of cities and towns in Greater Boston, accompanied by wise housing and health laws, will be to relieve city congestion and promote the growth of the less thickly settled suburbs.

This was the effect of all the earlier annexations, except in Charlestown, where there was little room for growth. The population of Roxbury was increased four times since it was annexed, that of West Roxbury five times, that of Brighton five and one half times and that of Dorchester eleven times,—while the rest of Boston has increased only about two and one half times. A distribution of the workers' families over a wider territory, under better living conditions, will be one of the greatest preventive and humanitarian measures that can be undertaken. It implies, of course, transportation at reasonable fares and improved street connections. All three results would follow the creation of a metropolitan city, for which they furnish an irrefutable argument.

Finally, there are administrative improvements and economies that are by no means negligible,—the reduction of overhead charges, the saving by purchase in large quantities through a central department of supplies, all the gains that go with concentration in ordinary business. Various functions that these thirty or more cities and towns now perform separately could be performed better through a common organization.

The objections to Greater Boston, in so far as they express anything more than mere indifference or inertia, seem to rest on two principal grounds,—first, a fear of centralization and exploitation by a city which the objectors believe to be badly and expensively governed, and, second, a sincere attachment to local traditions and a reluctance to lose local identity.

But the City of Boston, as our cities go, is neither badly nor expensively governed. Its tax rate is normally the lowest among the cities in the metropolitan district and lower than many if not most of the towns. It is, moreover, a fact beyond question that the rapid increase in the cost of government in Boston is due chiefly to the state and metropolitan charges and to the cost of schools and that it corresponds to similar increases in the other metropolitan cities and towns. It is certainly not proposed to exploit any neighboring municipality. The impelling motive of this union does not spring from the necessities of municipal finance. Local taxes might even be assessed at separate rates as in London and New York, if the powers of the metropolitan city should be restricted to the great metropolitan issues. As for local attachments, I recognize their value and would preserve them rather than destroy them.

The surrounding cities and towns would, in fact, be eased in their burdens by drawing on the enormous valuation of Boston, which even now bears the lion's share of the metropolitan expenditures for water, sewers and parks. They would presumably have access to our more complete municipal service,—our hospitals, libraries, trade schools and similar facilities. Industrial training, in particular, might be advanced throughout the whole district, so as to go hand in hand with the expected commercial and industrial development. They would assuredly gain by improved transportation and would increase rapidly in numbers.

It should be understood that there is in this plan no antagonism to the metropolitan cities and towns and no

criticism of their governments. We are all struggling along under a disjointed arrangement, isolated from one another and a little bit estranged. This proposal is a friendly invitation to establish relations of greater intimacy. I believe we should form a partnership in certain matters of supreme importance and of common interest. I do not propose to take away any privilege from the citizens or to deprive them of a voice in their local affairs. Under the plan most likely to be adopted the citizen's vote is doubled and his power of direct action notably enlarged. He may take part in all his home affairs as now and at the same time assist in choosing the officers who would administer the district as a whole.

I want to lift this question up to a broader plane — to get it above personalities and pettiness of whatever sort. I appeal to business men and labor unions, to public bodies and all good Bostonians — for that is what we are proud to call ourselves, every one of us, when we go away from home — to enter into the discussion, to take the matter seriously, and to create a body of favorable opinion which must finally be heeded. It is a problem of city planning, of good government, of cooperative effort with the largest ends in view. To promote commerce and industry, to balance and harmonize the citizenship, to effect great metropolitan improvements, to break up the degrading slums and tranquillize the working population by a wise distribution and comfortable housing, surely these are objects worthy of the attention of our most constructive minds.

I have said that within twenty-five years Greater Boston will contain 2,000,000 people. Only twenty of the states contain so many today. The new city will be richer and more powerful, as well as more populous, than most of these great divisions of the nation. It will be the capital, not of Massachusetts only but of all New England, and Massachusetts and all New England have an interest in this plan. It will embrace within its boundaries Harvard, the Institute of Technology, Rad-

cliffe College, Wellesley, Boston College, Tufts, and the Perkins Institution for the Blind, rounding out its own greatness by the lustre these institutions will shed and relating them in turn in a wholesome, democratic way to the community out of which all of them have grown. The government of the new city, if it realizes its best possibilities, may include men of the highest distinction, just as eminent men of all shades of opinion, from Lord Rosebery to John Burns, have sat in the London County Council.

In 1522 Boston changed from the town to the city form of government. I suggest that we prepare the way now to make possible by the existence of the city of Greater Boston a fitting observance of the centennial of our first city charter. The change a century ago was from town to city. Now it must be from city to metropolis.

II.

INCREASE OF POPULATION IN GREATER BOSTON.

	1875.	1915.	Increase.
Boston.....	341,909	745,439	112%
Northern Division.....	205,451	651,490	213%
Southern Division.....	78,559	163,979*	147%
Greater Boston.....	625,129	1,568,768	154%

This table shows that the growth of population in the Metropolitan District has taken place in Boston proper and in the cities and towns of the Northern Division,—especially those adjoining Boston. There has been little growth in those of the Southern Division, excepting in Newton and Brookline, which lie rather to the west and are close to Boston, and in Quincy. It is to the south and in the outer fringe of towns that future expansion must come, if congestion is to be avoided.

* Hyde Park was annexed to Boston in 1911 and is not included. The omission is immaterial.

III.

CONGESTION.—NUMBER OF INHABITANTS PER SQUARE MILE IN 1915.

Boston	16,980
Ward 6 (old)	75,456
Ward 8 (old)	66,176

A GROUP OF NORTHERN CITIES.

Cambridge	17,461	Weymouth	836
Salemville	22,677	Braintree	681
Chelsea	22,855	Wellesley	640
Everett	11,093	Hingham	234
Malden	9,589	Canton	295
Lynn	9,124	Dover	65

A GROUP OF SOUTHERN TOWNS.

This table compares the group of compactly settled cities to the north and west with the sparsely occupied district to the south. The deplorable congestion in the North and West Ends of Boston is also shown.

IV.

DEATH RATES PER THOUSAND, 1916.

Boston		17.8
Cambridge	13.9	Weymouth 13.1
Salemville	12.1	Braintree 9.0
Chelsea	14.5	Wellesley 7.3
Everett	10.2	Hingham 11.1
Malden	11.6	Canton 10.8
Lynn	12.9	Dover 7.6

The influence of congestion on the death rate is fairly established by this table. Boston and the thickly settled cities to the north are less healthy than the southern towns. A wider distribution of the population would bring about more wholesome conditions.

V.

VALUATIONS, 1918.

Boston	\$1,486,222,298
Northern Division	708,444,016
Southern Division	* 336,502,974
Greater Boston	2,541,169,288

The valuation of Boston is nearly three fifths that of the entire district. Two wards alone,—the downtown wards,—are valued at more than \$800,000,000, or almost a third of the valuation of Greater Boston. It is evident that the cost of metropolitan improvements and of all joint enterprises will fall mainly on Boston and not on the surrounding municipalities. It will fall largely on the two business wards.

* One-half the valuation of the Southern Division is contributed by Brookline and Newton.

VI.

THE METROPOLITAN ASSESSMENTS.

	Water.	Parks and Boulevards.	Sewerage.	Charles River Basin.	Total.
Boston, 1918	\$1,741,008	\$791,445	\$350,248	\$222,515	\$3,105,216
Remaining cities and towns	573,288	596,067	826,531	136,023	2,131,909
Total	\$2,314,296	\$1,387,512	\$1,176,778	\$358,538	\$5,241,127

At present Boston pays about three fifths of all the present metropolitan assessments, although an important part of her territory is not served by the metropolitan sewers and nearly all the metropolitan parks lie outside of Boston. Boston is also liable for about three fifths of the metropolitan debt, the figures for July 1, 1917, being as follows:

Net debt	\$54,502,215
Liability of Boston	33,741,447

VII.

POPULATION AS AFFECTED BY POLITICAL UNION.

	1865.	1870.	1875.	1915.
Roxbury (1868).....	28,240	34,753	50,423	127,083
Dorchester (1870).....	10,717	12,261	15,788	138,119
West Roxbury (1874).....	6,912	8,086	11,783	56,771
Brighton (1874).....	3,854	4,367	6,200	34,782
Charlestown (1874).....	26,399	28,323	33,556	39,000

These five towns were annexed to Boston in the period, 1868-74. Their growth at this time was slow. Since annexation it has been rapid. Dorchester has multiplied its population eleven times, West Roxbury five times, Brighton six times, Roxbury four times. Charlestown was already built up and could gain little.

It seems clear that political union with Boston draws population into the suburbs united. Brookline, though having a larger area, has grown less rapidly than Brighton. Only Revere and Winthrop, because of special conditions, surpass the growth of Dorchester. No other cities or towns approach it.

VIII.

DEBT AND TAX RATES.

	Net Debt, 1915.	Net Debt, including Rapid Transit Debt.
Boston.....	\$45,532,442	\$57,504,600
Remainder of District.....		34,543,947

The Rapid Transit Debt is virtually a metropolitan debt, assumed wholly by Boston, but charged upon the Boston Elevated Railway Company in the form of an annual rental. Apart from this the debt of Boston is scarcely higher, in proportion to its valuation, than that of the remainder of the district.

TAX RATES, 1918.

Boston		\$21.20
Cambridge	\$25.00	Wakefield \$23.50
Somerville	23.20	Arlington 24.20
Chelsea	23.80	Salem 27.95
Everett	22.60	Stoneham 27.10
Revere	26.80	Roxbury 25.00
Malden	24.40	Lexington 25.00
Melford	22.60	Quincy 24.20
Melrose	23.40	Braintree 21.60

Sixteen cities and towns show a higher tax rate than Boston for 1918. Towns which show a low tax rate are usually those which, like Brookline, contain many wealthy citizens and receive a large share of the returns from the State Income Tax.

IX.

FOREIGN TRADE.—IMPORTS AND EXPORTS.

	Imports.	Exports.	Total.
1902.....	\$78,143,151	\$86,655,754	\$164,798,905
1908.....	89,121,981	84,359,536	173,475,517
1914 *.....	163,013,099	71,963,579	234,976,678
1917 *.....	229,403,531	210,221,730	437,625,270

The year 1914, the last year of normal commerce, shows a substantial gain in imports but an export trade actually losing ground. It is generally agreed that the export trade must be built up if Boston is to become a first-class port.

* The figure for this year includes the eight minor ports of the State.

X.

FOREIGN TRADE, 1915.—COMPARISON WITH OTHER CITIES.

Percentage of Imports and Exports of the United States.

	Imports.	Exports.
New York.....	55.61	43.12
New Orleans.....	4.76	7.57
Boston.....	9.12	3.88
Galveston.....	0.61	4.32
Philadelphia.....	4.36	3.27
San Francisco.....	4.84	2.94
Baltimore.....	1.40	4.77

Galveston, New Orleans and Baltimore surpass Boston in the value of their exports. New York completely overshadows us. Good judges believe that a federated city would create better conditions for outward-bound commerce and command a larger share of it.

XI.

MANUFACTURES.

CITIES, 1914.	Number of Wage Earners.	Wages Paid.	Value of Product.
New York.....	5-5,276	\$357,108,000	\$2,252,332,000
Chicago.....	313,719	213,737,000	1,133,195,000
Philadelphia.....	251,246	133,249,000	745,500,000
St. Louis.....	95,058	51,150,000	390,350,000
Boston.....	78,394	49,444,000	284,802,000
Cleveland.....	138,317	67,351,000	352,415,000
Pittsburgh.....	73,799	35,900,000	215,172,000
Fittsburgh.....	69,621	45,000,000	240,000,000
Detroit.....	66,003	62,447,000	301,348,000
Greater Boston.....	166,401	106,573,000	586,419,000

Boston ranked seventh in 1914 in value of product and wages paid, standing far below Detroit and Cleveland. Since then she has fallen to the eighth place. Greater Boston would rank fourth in all respects and could easily maintain her position and perhaps improve it.

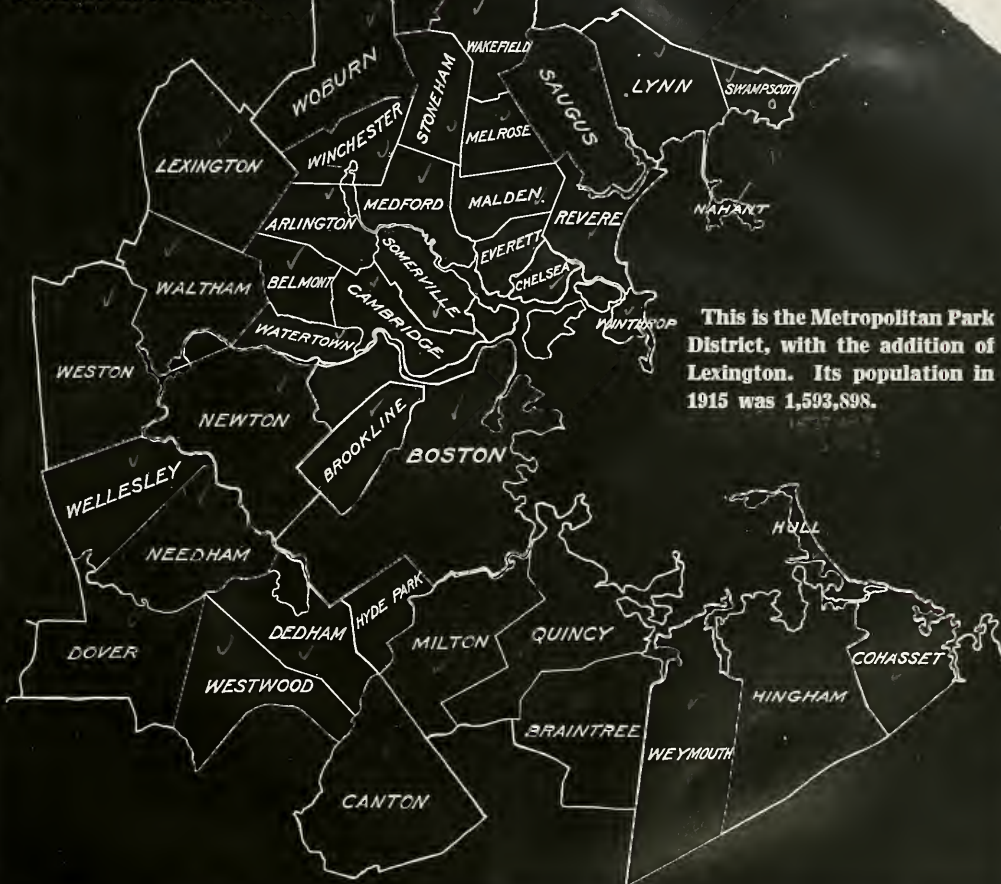
Circumferential Thoroughfares of the Metropolitan District.
A Diagram Showing their Broken and Irregular Courses.



Each town has a cry of distress, and yet all are helpless. . . . It remains for the district as a whole to provide this cooperative possibility.

[Report of the Metropolitan Improvement Commission, 1914.]

GREATER BOSTON



This is the Metropolitan Park District, with the addition of Lexington. Its population in 1915 was 1,593,898.

APPENDIX.

MAP OF GREATER BOSTON WITH
STATISTICAL TABLES AND
A DIAGRAM.

I.
AREA AND POPULATION.

	Population, 1910.	Area in Square Miles.	Population per Square Mile.
New York.....	4,706,883	315.6	15,003
Chicago.....	2,186,203	199.60	11,000
Philadelphia.....	1,512,108	129.5	11,661
St. Louis.....	667,029	61.3	11,207
Boston.....	670,588	47.7	14,088
Cleveland.....	597,003	52.5	10,670
Baltimore.....	558,445	31.5	17,729
Detroit.....	495,799	76.2	6,112
Greater Boston.....	1,423,429	422.00	3,373

Boston stands in the second class of cities in population. It has the smallest area of all the large cities except Baltimore and the most congested population of all except Baltimore and New York. **Greater Boston** would stand in the first class in population. It would have the largest area of all the great cities and by far the least congestion.

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